

What is claimed is:

1. A combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device comprising:
 - (a) a housing having a hand grip thereon;
 - (b) a wireless scanning device operable to scan a bar code for generating an electronic response of the bar code and obtain identification information, said wireless scanning device being coupled to said housing; and
 - (c) an adhesive applicator operable to apply adhesive material, said adhesive applicator being coupled to said housing.
2. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 1, further comprising a digital image recording device coupled to said housing.
3. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 1, further comprising a transmitting portion operable to transmit identification information and/or digital images from said combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning/imaging device to a central station over a communication network
4. A combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device comprising:
 - (a) a handle assembly having an outer portion comprising a base, a grip portion adjacent said base, and a head portion adjacent said grip portion, and an inner portion defining a battery compartment;
 - (b) a frame attached to the head portion of said handle assembly, said frame having two or more recesses formed therein;
 - (c) a wireless scanning/imaging device mounted within a recess provided in said frame; and
 - (d) a carton sealer mounted within a recess provided in said frame.

5. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, further comprising an antenna conductively connected with said wireless scanning/imaging device.

6. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, wherein said carton sealer is a tape dispenser.

7. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, wherein said carton sealer is a stapler.

8. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, wherein said carton sealer is a glue gun.

9. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, further comprising one or more electrical contacts disposed upon the base of said handle assembly, and in electrical connection with said battery compartment, wherein a battery placed within said battery compartment may be recharged by a power source via said electrical contacts.

10. The combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device of claim 4, wherein said wireless scanning/imaging device comprises a wireless scanning unit comprising one or more of a laser scanner, a long range laser scanner, a charged coupled device (CCD) scanner, an RFID scanner, and an optical imager.

11. A method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) sealing said package via a sealer provided on said combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning device; and

(b) recording identification information provided on or in said package via said wireless scanning device.

12. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning device according to claim 11, further comprising:

(c) recording a digital image of the package via the wireless scanning/imaging device, so as to record a digital image of package at the time of shipment to ascertain the condition thereof.

13. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning device according to claim 11, further comprising:

(d) transmitting said identification information and/or said digital image from said combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning/imaging device to a central station over a communication network.

14. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning/imaging device according to claim 11, further comprising:

(e) storing said identification information in a database via communication with said central station.

15. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld adhesive applicator/wireless scanning/imaging device according to claim 11, wherein said communication network comprises at least one of a wireless local area network (WLAN), wireless wide area network (WWAN),

16. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device according to claim 11, wherein said sealer is a tape dispenser.

17. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device according to claim 11, wherein said sealer is a stapler.

18. The method of preparing a package for shipment using a combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device according to claim 11, wherein said sealer is a glue gun.

19. A system operative to collect and store carton identification information and condition at a central station comprising:

a central station operative to receive and store package identification and condition information from at least one combination handheld sealer/wireless scanning/imaging device over a communication network.

20. A computer program product embodied on a computer readable medium comprising program logic for centrally collecting and analyzing package identification and condition information, comprising:

a receiving means for enabling a computer to receive package identification and condition information from at least one wireless scanning/imaging device over a communication network at a central station; and

analyzing means for enabling a computer to analyze and store said package identification and condition information at said central station, responsive to said receiving means.